

Christian, however, in proportion as he advances, are the proofs of his faith, which for him require no support from the first. The intimate experience of his heart in which he is able to recognise ever more fully the truth of the divine word and its marvellous adaptation to human nature, sorrowful deceptions which detach him from the world and turn his regards all the more to the beauty of the eternal realities, the crumbling away of systems which seem as though they must replace the Gospel for ever, but which leave behind them only a void the more complete, only a disenchantment the more bitter; intelligence more complete of the plan of God and of His hidden ways, answered prayers, unexpected deliverances, sweetness mingled with the most severe experiences, intimate consolations, ineffable visitations from on high,—do you not recognise all this, my brother? Is it not out of such experiences you would often repeat with most profound conviction, “I know in whom I have believed”?

## THE FÉSOLE CLUB PAPERS.

BY W. G. COLLINGWOOD.

### X.—INFINITY.

In one respect the *Parents' Review* should commend itself to the antiquarian mind, because, like the most venerable pre-historic civilisations, it begins its year with the vernal equinox, and brings out the first of its zodiacal twelve in March. And so our first club year closes with this article. Some promise was made at starting of a prize, to be competed for by the members, and judged by a well-known artist. And that promise we mean to keep. In order that the second year's course may start fair in March, the competition drawings should be sent in to the writer not later than the last of February. Any subject may be chosen that will best display the competitor's powers; the prize will be awarded to the best work, irrespective of size, subject, or style. But the drawings must have been done within this month of February, and specially for the purpose of this competition. It would be obviously unfair if by any chance some member were to submit a drawing which was the result of long labour or happy inspiration, directed, or perhaps assisted, by a teacher. We want this month to take stock of our progress, to test our powers, and prizes and praises are nothing to the person who has obeyed that wisest of maxims, “Know thyself.”

An infinite problem. We may partly know ourselves, as we may partly know anything else. But infinity means getting all round a subject, and finding that it has no end, that it has no beginning, that it can only be symbolised by that ancient snake of mythology, with its tail in its mouth.

In common language we misuse the word *infinite*. The image it presents to our minds is that of a ladder, up which we toil step by step, only to find that another step is ever beyond us. That is not infinity; that is repetition. We *must* drop off

some day; and *there* will be the end. And trying to read infinity into that image is indeed bewildering, because illogical; as absurd a state of mind as that of the legendary Irishman who, trying to unwind a tangle of twine, cried out in despair, "Faith, and I think somebody must have cut the end of this string off!" If you would picture infinity, stand still, and draw round you a magic circle. There is a line which will have no end; its beginning is its end; it is a thing done for ever, complete; and well chosen as a symbol of the immovable, within which mystic isle you can stand secure from all the powers of darkness.

Again; in Time, what is our notion of eternity? Is it the vulgar idea of the ticking clock that never stops—hour after hour, year after year, millennium after millennium? But what then? Surely such a conception is not that of endlessness, but of periods defined and limited, differing only from the calendar of this life in the greater heart-sickness of hope deferred. A measure implies a limit; a limit implies an end. The end may be not yet; it may be out of sight; yet if it is implied there is no eternity, no infinity.

But picture, if you can, the annihilation of Time; a state in which no one could say, "It takes me twenty minutes to walk a mile, or five minutes to run it, or one minute to steam it, or such and such a fraction of a second to telegraph it." A state in which your spirit is independent of a body; in which to think is to be, and to will is to do. You are then in the Infinite, in Eternity.

And to picture such a state you need not wait until after death—so far as your spirit is now and here free to will, not tied and bound by the chain of circumstances; so far as it is able to think truly, it is already in the enjoyment, in those respects, of Infinity, of Eternity. To understand it, is indeed an infinite problem, as we said; because it means understanding something that lies outside the world of ordinary experience, something you cannot see and touch; something, however, which you can think and know. Eternal because character is fixed; Infinite because individuality is complete in itself.

Observe that the infinity is not mere multiplicity of detail. It is not, "however much you learn, there is still something more." That is only another way of saying that our powers of learning are poor. And when we apply what we have been discussing

to the question of art, we ought to see in a moment the proper principles of detail in a composition, and the proper meaning of artistic infinity.

On hearing about it at first one might say, "That means I must put quantities of little things into my picture, and into each little thing I must put quantities more of little things, because that would be an approach to infinity." Pardon me; a double fallacy. For, first, it is not an *approach* to infinity that will do you the least good; you must either have infinity itself, or you have it not at all. And, secondly, have we not already seen that it lies, not in repetition, but in completion? That it is not the string with the end cut off, the Jacob's ladder; but the circle, the ring; not the wearied struggle of perpetual addition, but the repose of content.

But you may say, "How does this differ from unity?" In this way; that Unity is the dot, Infinity the circle. When Unity embraces Variety, when from the mere point without parts and magnitude it grows into the great harmonious whole, it then becomes the Infinite. In that process consists life. The moment that Unity is combined with Variety there is a living whole; and everything that expresses a living being, a whole, a soul, is an expression at the same time of what is rightly understood by the word Infinite.

Go and look out of window a minute; I am sure I am boring you with my metaphysics. It will not be long before the spring will be here. We have some snowdrops, I think, and crocuses coming up; brisk little things, so prettily represented by Walter Crane, with his awakening babies stretching, and yawning, and jumping up to play. And you notice that across the lawn the coppice looks not so wind-beaten and draggletail as it did a while ago. The twigs of oak seem standing on the tip-toe of expectation. It will not be long before they double their fists into buds and then fling out their hands into an ecstasy of spring foliage. Stand close to the window here. You remember how the rose tree on the wall flapped and scratched the panes through all the "drear-nighted December," till sometimes you were quite frightened; it seemed so like a ghost wanting to come in from the storm. How is it that now there is an alertness, a vigour, about the plant? You who have learned to draw can see at a glance that there is life in its lines, no longer drooping, but switched up, spruce and springy, into

quite a different curve. And if we try to draw the sort of curve they take, we find, as we have found before, that it is unlike a worm-wriggle or an end of thread; that it is a curve which constantly changes its direction, and yet, as you surmise, is under the control of some guiding principle. It is a line of life. It is what they call an infinite curve; infinite, not because it is always changing its direction, but because its perpetual variety is controlled and harmonised by unity of general direction, and vitality of action implied.

Now, when you come to draw, and to look at drawings, you will find that all possible lines may be thus expressive of life, or by hair's-breadth difference may be inert, lifeless. And those artists who have grasped the principle of infinite curvature make drawings that have a catch in them, a life about them, which can be explained by no talking, nor demonstrated by any measurement, and yet felt at once by the intelligent mind and experienced eye. That is one expression of infinity in art.

What curvature is to line, gradation is to tone and colour. A perfectly even progression from dark to light is as uncharacteristic of nature as a perfectly even progression from vice to virtue in moral development. A sudden ungradated leap is in both cases impossible. Flatness in either kind means death. And so another expression of infinity is given in nature, and in the works of good artists, by subtle gradation of colour and tone; by changes in intensity, varying in their impetus from step to step, and yet all tending in the same direction, speeding or slackening in accordance with a fixed law.

Let us come to the window again, and look up at that film of cloud. I wish I could show you the sunset sky, clear and luminous from zenith to horizon, changing with every degree from deep purply blue, through rose, to golden of intense light. That indeed would teach the lesson, and exemplify infinity like nothing else. But we see too little of clear skies here; and yet there is infinity of gradation in every wreath, and wisp, and rag, and cushion of cloud.

From its darkest point of shade it lightens at first rapidly, and yet how tenderly! As your eye follows the tint, the gradation is retarded; light comes into the surface more and more slowly in this cloud we are looking at, until at last we arrive at its pitch of highest brightness, beyond which it fades again to the next edge of darkness, or to the brink of the deep blue.

Look again at the lawn. There are no sunstreaks on it now; and you might think at first that it was one flat tint of uniform green. And yet, when you examine it more closely, half shutting your eyes, you see that the green grows darker, changes both its tone and its colour, where on the other side the trees a little overshadow it. Just under the trees, how dark! but from them spreads a soft bloom of tone, more distinct at first; but as it comes toward you into the light, rapidly and more rapidly disappearing. There is gradation like this on every mass of foliage, on every leaf and blade of grass; how much more on that consummate expression of life, the subtle and mysterious modelling of the human figure! It is not only gradation that you must represent, it is *infinite* gradation; gradation varying in intensity with every step, and yet controlled in its variety by unity of direction.

And now, if you please, we will look at some of these drawings that you have brought me. Here is a piece of sky that is one flat wash of cobalt. You were in too great a hurry to gradate it at all. Here is a cloud, done in two splashes of paint; a dark side and a light side; and somehow it does not look soft, and melting, and moving, and mysterious. Here is a tree in which you have tried hard to express what you thought to be infinity by laborious niggling of multitudinous leaves; but where are the springing lines of life in its branches? the play of varying light on the subtly modulated masses of its foliage? the Unity that should bind all its variety into a living Infinity? In two minutes you might have suggested that, with a few dashing lines and a cleverly melting tint, if you had perfect command of your materials and a clear knowledge of the principle of Infinity,—or, say rather, the ready power of sympathetic observation which makes the difference between the real artist and other people. For the expression of Infinity is given easily if given at all. The very hand you work with is alive, and its natural impulse is to strike out lines that express life. That is why we find rapid and passionate sketching so pleasing, so lively, when it is done by a great artist.

But to attain to the power of such sketching, the great master has spent his earlier years in getting at the secrets of life. His free-hand work is really free because his fingers are not hampered with traditions of copy-book pothooks and formal draughtsmanship. In some cases artists have luckily never

learned to write; their hands have never been cramped into round text. In other cases they have shaken off the bondage, as you and I must do if we want to put life into our drawing. We cannot begin at once by dashing and scrawling away, on the supposition that *any* rapid work, with hands such as we have, will produce infinite curves unerringly, and natural gradations. We must learn command of our material; we must train our eyes and we must accustom our hands first, at all costs, with labour and pains perhaps, to be faithful and true; and then one day we may hope to meet with the reward of our labours in living creations of vital art.

Of *Principality* we have spoken in a previous paper (No. 4)—how that you must have one chief thing in your picture, to which the rest is subordinate. We called it then the chief law, because if it be remembered the others suggest themselves without ado. Only be certain what you want to show as principal subject, and contrast and symmetry come without calling; unity is, though not the same thing, akin to principality; variety cries out for it, so that the eye may not wander about the picture seeking in vain for a resting-place.

In finding that resting-place you find *Repose*. Artistic repose, the repose of a good composition, does not mean inertia, or the representation of people doing nothing; of lakes stagnant, and skies vacant. It means the satisfaction felt by the eye when it no longer roams about the picture unattracted by one thing more than another, when it no longer craves a light here and a dark there, a form more or less; because the whole arrangement is now in equilibrium—force balanced against force, and weight against weight; the details, various though they seemed, now united under a common headship. And to the whole, the expression of Infinity has given life. At last the labour of art ceases, for the work of art is done, and the test and token of its completion is *Repose*.

## WILD OATS.

BY AN OLD WOMAN.

Now that the early mental training of our children is beginning to be developed into a science, it would seem that some special teaching about the right use of money might well take a prominent place as one of the branches of this higher education.

It is the children who will be eventually the inheritors of a good income who chiefly seem to be in need of this teaching. The children of the poor find it for themselves in the pressure of life, in the carrying home of the wage, at the poor board, where they learn that a hot dinner is too costly a treat for every day, and by the ragged garment, which must be worn, and mended, and worn again until the wearer can, by the sweat of his brow, earn enough to buy a new one. Thus the poor boy or girl can never grow up without some practical knowledge of the value of money, to an extent measured by their possession of it. But the sons and daughters of the rich cannot attain this knowledge unless it be educationally—may we say artificially?—provided for them. And yet how much greater is the responsibility in this latter case, when the inherited fortune is flung into the lap of the grown-up child to play with at his own sweet will!

Ismar Thiusen, in his "Looking Forward," has told us of an ideal state of society in which it was illegal for any person to inherit a larger sum than 20,000 dollars, this being considered sufficient for the comfortable maintenance of one individual; and whatever he desired more than this was to be produced by his own labour, otherwise it would be considered pernicious to him, and therefore perhaps to the State. Thus there were no rich idlers in that community.

But with us the largest fortune can be inherited by a single man or woman, however incapable or unworthy. It may come from a concourse of circumstances, or it may come from a